

Matt Faw
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Dear sir or madam,

I am writing to share what I have experienced as the character of John Dowell. I first met John around 2000, through our mutual involvement in the Contact Improv folk dance scene, here in L.A. When he found out that I was interested in discovering rock climbing, he took me under his wing. He had spent years climbing and caving, and teaching others to do so, before I met him, so he had the skills and gear to mentor me through my novice climbs. He was patient with my fear, skilled at communicating what needed to be done, and generous about taking the time to ease me into this scary new sport. He introduced me to friction climbs in Joshua Tree and multiple pitch climbs in Idyllwild. We camped and traveled together, and always had a good time.

Rock climbing was only the beginning of our collaborative play together. We began practicing kendo together, and soon built up a small group of people interested in exploring sword play (with bamboo swords). We did parkour together, and other urban adventuring. John was always brave and alive and interested in exploring beyond his previous capabilities. He was an excellent friend to have around, always willing to discover new ways of being playful in the world.

John was also a performer, improvising dance pieces, solo or with a friend. He was always very dedicated to being authentic in his movement, and fearless in his approach to performing. He was a great dance partner as well, being very sensitive and aware of other's needs and capabilities in the dance.

John was always trying to improve himself. He was constantly taking classes to learn to be a better Hakomi and massage therapist. He generously offered massages to friends, as he was learning, and sought always to bring comfort and healing to others.

After John moved from L.A. to Berkeley, to pursue a relationship with a girlfriend there, I missed having him around. Neither of us were very good at

keeping in touch, but we still occasionally made trips to Joshua Tree together, to play on the rocks and commune with nature. When I heard the news of John's arrest, I was entirely flabbergasted, as he had never made any comment or action, that suggested that he would be interested in or capable of doing such an act. It was hard to believe that the charges I heard about, were about the John Dowell I knew, because nothing in my experience suggested that outcome.

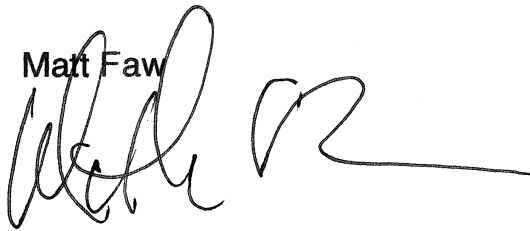
The acts that John Dowell is accused of are heinous, of course, and I was in shock, when I heard of them. I don't have the tiniest insight into how he might have arrived at those actions. But I can say with clarity that the John Dowell that I knew was kind, generous, very intelligent, giving, caring, spiritual, and full of the zest for life. I saw within him, absolutely no interest in hurting others. He was a sensitive soul, who felt deeply, and he was an awake aware adventurer, who embraced life fully.

I hope that you can take some of this context, and see how multidimensional John Dowell really is. He is very much capable of goodness, kindness and charity. He has a lot to offer the world, and has a great deal of inner integrity. Please consider this testimony, when considering his sentencing.

Thank you very much for your time.

best,

Matt Faw

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Faw', followed by a long horizontal flourish.

March 3, 2013

To Whom It May Concern
Re: John Dowell

Dear Sirs and Madams,

I write today to share what I know of John Dowell's character. I first met John in August of 2000, when I began attending Contact Improv Dance in Santa Monica, California. At the end of the first dance I attended, three people were introduced as people that newcomers could speak to if they had any questions or needed to talk to someone, and John Dowell was one of those three people. I came to see over the weeks and months that each of these three people, and several others, were "old-timers" in the community who often volunteered to teach 30-minute beginner classes to newcomers at the beginning of each 2-1/2 hour dance jam. John consistently showed up as part of this dance community and helped hold it together by teaching in a gentle and creative way, by using humor that was silly in nature rather than making fun at anyone's expense, by including everyone who wanted to be included, and by taking responsibility for unlocking and locking the dance hall on time when it was his turn. We generally went out to eat together after dance jams, so a community of friends had formed over the years which welcomed newcomers with open arms.

In the fall of 2000, John took the step of renting a dance space in order to offer additional classes to people who wanted more training than the 30-minute warm-up classes. I and a few others began attending these classes. John's stated purpose for offering these classes was to raise the level of technical training in the community overall, so that we would all have more fun at the dance jams. He also shared that he loved to teach. I can report that he was an excellent teacher, and my skill level improved dramatically over the months I attended class with him. John put a lot of thought into the content of his classes, and they were both fun and interesting, and often imparted techniques to the body before the mind by using moving meditation, visualization, Feldenkrais, and other techniques.

I learned from the other Contact Improv "old-timers" that John had been a part of this community for over ten years. And I learned from John that he had been dancing Contact Improv for about 20 years, and teaching and performing for at least ten years, and also had done other physical training that had prepared him for this, including rock climbing, caving, martial arts, and ballet dance training for alignment. "Caving" involves climbing down into underground caves in the dark, teamed up with a friend, using ropes and pitons, relying on each other for balance and footing, and basically saving each other's lives over and over again; it requires a lot of trust. I think John also taught rock climbing. I know he taught meditation, because we meditated together a lot, usually with John leading the meditation. Years before, John had also taught music (piano, guitar, and sight-reading). John also paints; I saw a painting of one of his girlfriends, and it was a good likeness, with a lot of feeling. John is quite talented and well-rounded in many ways.

As I got to know John better, I found out that he had training in Feldenkrais and other bodywork modalities, and we began to do session trades of healing work because we each needed the work. I was recovering from a car accident, and John had both older injuries, plus new muscle soreness

from working construction jobs. John was giving me Feldenkrais sessions, which involves moving arms and legs around in gentle ways that get the nervous system to release muscle contractions. I was giving John Cranio-Sacral sessions that essentially accomplished the same thing with a different technique. John was an excellent session trade partner for me for many reasons: our level of skill was comparable – we are each excellent at what we do; we are each incredibly sensitive practitioners and able to modify techniques in the moment as needed for the client, and we each felt that the sessions traded were a fair exchange. During that time I went through a relationship breakup, and some of my emotional trauma came up when John was giving me sessions, and John was great at being a good listener and helping me process my grief. We often went out to eat before or after our session trades, so those were more hours I was spending with a friend who seemed to me to be gentle, sweet, and emotionally supportive.

During the time I knew John, he completed training and certification in Hakomi, which is a meditation-based and body-mind connection-centered method of psychotherapy. At this time I myself was training in Somatic Trauma Resolution (Somatic Experiencing), so John and I did session trades as we each honed our new skills. John gave me one of the best Hakomi psychotherapy sessions of my life, helping me access and clear an emotional trauma related to my mother from age two. I have had years of psychotherapy, and John was able to help resolve in one session something that had plagued me for my entire life, and that no other psychotherapist had been able to get to the root of.

In around 2004 or 2005, John moved to Berkeley to move in with a woman with whom he hoped to develop a relationship that would lead to marriage, so our friendship was maintained over the phone. When I went to Berkeley for the West Coast Contact Improv Dance Festival, John and his girlfriend Kay provided crash pads for me and another visiting dancer. John's relationship with Kay lasted about four years, and when it ended, John was deeply depressed. He wanted more than anything to marry and start a family. John lost his nephew to cancer sometime soon after that, and that was another hard blow. John moved to Santa Cruz to start a new life. We kept in touch by phone and I knew he had been in a couple more relationships that sounded promising, and his Hakomi practice was taking off, and he seemed fairly happy. But then he had a very bad breakup with a girlfriend.

That last breakup was a turning point for John. He had hoped the relationship would lead to marriage, and was not only shocked and hurt by the way she broke up with him, but was traumatized by some things she said which were so terribly cruel that John wouldn't repeat them to me, which was exceptionally inconsistent with the nature of our friendship. Over the years, we had each supported the other with relationship advice, sharing all of our emotional challenges with each other, and never before had something happened which John was uncomfortable sharing with me. John was aware that he was in crisis, and as his friend, I was aware of it too.

When the holidays came around and he visited family, John's brother Bill convinced John to take a more stable job doing computer consulting, which John did. He got a job that sent him to Detroit, Michigan, which paid very well, but which was ultimately not a good thing for John's emotional stability. Moving to Detroit left John completely isolated from friends and family, working long hours, with no social support system or dance community or other creative outlets. That might have been okay if he had not just been through the worst breakup of his life, but it was not okay for John at that time. The few times that we talked on the phone while John was in

Detroit, he told me how depressed he was, and I could tell he was spiraling deeper into crisis and unable to pull himself out of it.

I urged John to make a trip to Los Angeles to visit me and all of his other friends in LA, but he went to visit family for the holidays that year. My understanding of the timing of events that landed John in jail is that John molested and videotaped [REDACTED] while he was still in emotional crisis following that last bad relationship breakup and the isolation and depression of the months that followed. In a letter to me, John described how he felt after that last breakup this way: "something broke inside me." John was not at all himself at the time that he molested [REDACTED]. He was still isolated from anyone he could really talk to, was incredibly lonely and depressed, and desperately in need of psychotherapy and friendship support, and it was not available. I firmly believe that if John had gotten the help he needed, this never would have happened.

I realize that this account of events does not excuse what John did, but I hope it helps to explain it.

And I hope it helps to paint a picture of a person who is incredibly smart, incredibly emotionally sensitive, a loyal friend, willing to be of service in his community of friends, willing to be of service to clients suffering physical or emotional distress, willing to teach and share his vast array of skills and talents, generally more self-aware than most people, willing to examine his own faults and shortcomings and make genuine efforts to change (had successfully quit smoking and was attending SLAA 12-step meetings for sex addiction), generally has excellent communication skills (regularly attended "Non-Violent Communication" workshops), and in my personal and professional opinion, has a high potential for healing from whatever caused him to act out in the way that he did.

Sincerely,



Andrea Sea Namaste

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